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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended for use by adult basic education practitioners in the screening of basic reading textbooks prior to their adoption for classroom use. The guide is in the form of a questionnaire and consists of dichotomous-choice questions arranged into three sections that relate to the product design, adult learning, and reading instruction aspects of a textbook. In the first section, the questions are grouped under the headings of format and content and instructional resources. In the second section, the questions are arranged under the headings of motivation, individual differences, principles of instruction, and relevance. In the final section, the questions are organized under the headings of word recognition, word analysis, comprehension, and assessment. A six-point Likert scale is provided for a summary rating of each element and for an overall rating of the textbook. (A discussion of the development of the instrument and of a study conducted to test its reliability is included.) (FL)

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Adult Basic Education

MATERIALS EVALUATION GUIDE

A systematic way to evaluate published materials for possible use in adult basic reading programs

INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATORS

1. Become familiar with the general form of this evaluation guide.
2. Become generally familiar with the instructional materials you intend to evaluate.
3. Go through all three parts of this guide, on PRODUCT DESIGN, ADULT LEARNING, and READING INSTRUCTION, evaluating the instructional materials against each item. Complete the summary ratings for each section as you go.

   NOTE: For each feature (such as I - GENERAL FORMAT AND CONTENT), there are four YES/NO questions. These are to guide your review of the materials, but not dictate your summary rating on the 6-point scale. For example, you might respond YES to all four questions, but give a summary rating of 3 (mediocre).
4. Complete the OVERALL RATING of the materials, on page 6, adding your extra comments about the materials.

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PRODUCT DESIGN

I. GENERAL FORMAT AND CONTENT

1. Is the material under review intended for adult basic reading instruction?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Are the physical features such as size, type legibility and page layout acceptable?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Is the general content, including illustrations, likely to be acceptable to adult learners? (Check for inappropriate ethnic emphasis, stereotyped sex-roles, social class bias, etc.)	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Does the format or content display any qualities of artistic or literary merit?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the GENERAL FORMAT AND CONTENT. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

II. INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

1. Could a teacher obtain adequate information on rationale of the materials (including objectives and scope) either from a teacher's manual or by reviewing the instructional text?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Does the material include provision for evaluating student achievement before and after instruction?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Does the material appear to require an unusual amount of specialized teacher training or preparation?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Does the material require special equipment not normally found in adult education settings?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

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ADULT LEARNING

I. MOTIVATION

		YES	NO
1.	Do the materials have an adult appearance (e.g. avoidance of covers or titles which mark the learners as illiterates)?	☐	☐
2.	Does the content adequately reflect the probable interests and needs of the adult learners in your class?	☐	☐
3.	Is the level of difficulty sufficient to challenge but not frustrate the adult learners in your class?	☐	☐
4.	Do the materials encourage successful completion of learning tasks (e.g. by clear objectives, manageable units of study)?	☐	☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the provision for MOTIVATION. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

II. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

		YES	NO
1.	Do the materials provide for the range of learning abilities of adults in your class (e.g. for 'slow', 'average', or 'fast' students)?	☐	☐
2.	Does the material provide for the interests of adults of different age groups?	☐	☐
3.	Are there opportunities for the adult to apply previous knowledge and experience to the new learning tasks?	☐	☐
4.	Does the material provide for learning through more than one sensory mode (reading, writing, speaking, listening)?	☐	☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the provision for INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

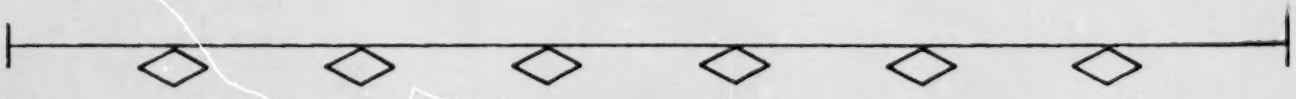
1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

Please turn to Page 3 — /

III. PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION

1. Is the instruction consistently presented in a way that the adult learner can readily understand?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Are adequate examples of concept and skills given?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Is there adequate provision for practice of new learning in a variety of contexts?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Can the adult learner independently obtain feedback on progress through means such as answer keys, self-scoring tests and progress charts?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the use of PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

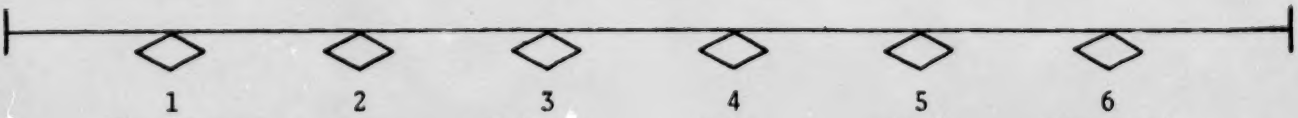


1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

IV. RELEVANCE

1. Does the content include material directly relevant to vocational and career interests?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Does the content include material directly relevant to social interests (e.g. voting, sports, hobbies, TV)?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Does the content include material directly relevant to personal 'coping' or 'survival' skills (e.g. reading medicine labels, reading supermarket ads)?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Is there a significant amount of information in the text that could be relevant and useful to many adults (e.g. how your tax dollar is spent, how to make long distance phone calls cheaply)?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the RELEVANCE. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.



1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

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READING INSTRUCTION

I. WORD RECOGNITION

1. Does instruction begin from basic sight words that the learner probably knows already?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. When new sight words are introduced, have they apparently been selected because of high frequency in adult use?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Is the word recognition vocabulary introduced and used in the context of meaningful passages?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Is the learner taught more than one approach to word recognition (e.g. use of cues from passage meaning/passage structure, or word structure).	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the WORD RECOGNITION instruction. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

II. WORD ANALYSIS

1. Does the material provide instruction in any method of systematically 'decoding' words?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Does the program place emphasis on decoding isolated letters or syllables out of context?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Are there adequate examples and practice of word analysis skills?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Are word analysis skills taught that may be used often and reliably in actual continuous reading?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the WORD ANALYSIS instruction. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

Please turn to Page 5 ►

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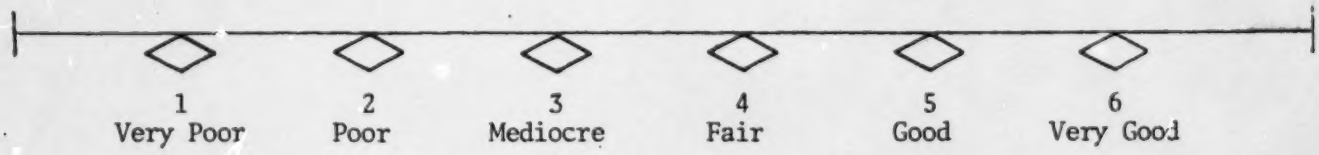
III. COMPREHENSION

1. Are practice comprehension passages included at the appropriate level of difficulty for the stage reached in instruction?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Do the materials deal adequately with ways of reading for a variety of different purposes (e.g. for enjoyment, for information, for person-to-person communication)?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Is the learner required to look for meaning beyond the literal level (e.g. at the inferential level, critical reading, 'between and beyond the lines')?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Are the reading tasks frequently related to the goal of comprehension of the whole passage?	YES ☐	NO ☐

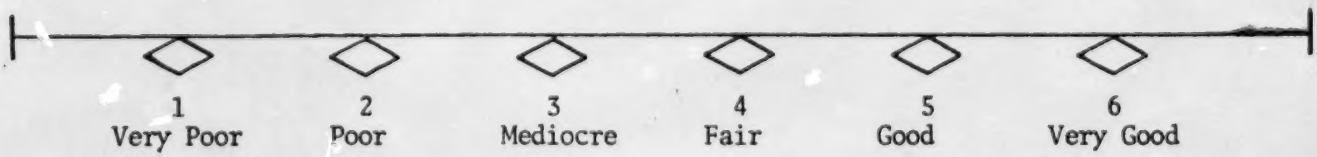
SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the COMPREHENSION instruction. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.



IV. ASSESSMENT

1. Is an adequate placement test, formal or informal inventory, or other assessment method recommended or supplied to establish the starting point of instruction?	YES ☐	NO ☐
2. Would it be clear to an average teacher, after reviewing the instructional materials, what prior competence a learner would need to begin the program?	YES ☐	NO ☐
3. Are progress tests, unit tests or mastery tests included or recommended, which relate directly to the instructional material?	YES ☐	NO ☐
4. Is there assessment of how the students can use their reading ability in real-life situations?	YES ☐	NO ☐

SUMMARY RATING: Summarize your rating of the quality of the ASSESSMENT. Mark an X in ONE of the boxes below.



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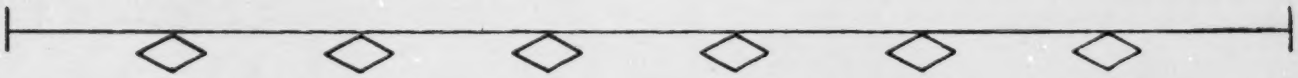
OVERALL RATING

Please indicate your OVERALL RATING for the material under review, in terms of its potential for successful use in adult basic reading instruction, by (a) marking an X in one of the boxes on the scale below, and (b) adding your subjective comments.



1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Poor	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	Very Good

Comments: (Please continue on back of this sheet if necessary.)

ATTACHMENT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT FOR THE EVALUATION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS IN ADULT BASIC READING INSTRUCTION

David Harrison, Ph. D.

The University of Arizona, 1979

Director: Raymond E. Schultz

A critical shortage of published instructional materials has been identified in adult basic literacy programs. Textbooks in this field have generally been found lacking in either (a) application of principles of adult learning, or (b) an integrated approach to basic reading instruction. An underlying cause of this problem may be the lack of any clear set of criteria by which to evaluate materials.

The purpose of this study was to develop and validate an instrument for the evaluation of published materials for adult basic reading instruction. A Materials Evaluation Guide was designed for use by adult basic education practitioners in the screening of basic reading textbooks prior to adoption for classroom use. The Guide was constructed after a review of relevant literature on adult learning, and on the theory and practice of basic reading instruction. Specific evaluation criteria were derived from the literature.

The Guide took the form of a written questionnaire. It consisted of dichotomous-choice questions relating to the product design, adult learning, and reading instruction aspects of a text under review. The items were grouped into ten elements: format and content,

instructional resources; motivation, individual differences, principles of instruction, relevance; word recognition, word analysis, comprehension and assessment. A six-point Likert scale was provided for a summary rating of each element, and for an overall rating of the text. To establish the content validity of the Guide, an initial form of the instrument was submitted to ten university professors, five from the field of adult learning, and five from reading education. All had experience with adult literacy programs. These judges independently rated each item for relevance, and a content validity index was subsequently estimated for the instrument. Items with low content validity were revised or replaced. The revised form of the Guide had an estimated content validity index of 0.82, which was accepted as satisfactory.

Instrument reliability was investigated in a pilot study, using a small sample of adult basic education instructors from selected community colleges in British Columbia. Five instructors each independently rated the same two recently published textbooks, using the Revised Form of the Materials Evaluation Guide. Inter-rater agreement was estimated at 0.67 and 0.71 (kappa = 0.35 and 0.34). Alpha coefficients of internal consistency for the instrument were estimated at 0.88 and 0.95. Instrument usability was studied through interviews with the five instructors, and found satisfactory. The average time taken to evaluate a textbook was 1 hour, 40 minutes.

In summary, the findings of the study were: (1) a set of evaluation criteria for adult basic reading materials could be derived

from the literature of adult learning; (2) an additional set of criteria could be derived from the theory and practice of basic reading instruction; (3) these criteria could be articulated in an evaluation instrument which demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability; and (4) the instrument was considered by a sample of practitioners to be a useful aid to critical judgement and decision-making in the evaluation of textbooks. A limitation of the findings was that this pilot reliability study involved only a small sample of evaluators.

Further validation of the Materials Evaluation Guide is required. Reliability needs to be investigated more extensively, using a larger number of evaluators and various text materials. Additionally, students should be involved in judging the content validity of the Guide.

The findings of this study indicate that, after further refinement, the Materials Evaluation Guide could be of value to instructors, teacher trainers, textbook authors, reviewers and publishers, as an aid in the selection of materials for adult basic reading instruction.